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# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Immediate Release

### GULF COAST DEER GRAZE ON OPEN GRASSY MARSHLANDS LIKE CATTLE

If the average American big-game hunter were told that deer live on open, grassy marshlands and crop grass as cattle do, he probably wouldn't believe the story. But this is exactly what happens along a narrow strip bordering the Gulf Coast, according to naturalists of the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior.

The deer, described a few years ago as variety of the popular white-tailed deer, are called Louisiana or McIlhenny deer. These coastal animals are much smaller in stature than those inhabiting the adjacent woodlands, the adult buck being under 3 feet tall and weighing little more than 100 pounds.

On the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana, Manager Harry Adams reports that the coastal deer do not graze on vegetation such as is found on woodland areas but crop grass in the marshland pastures used by cattle.

How many of these coastal deer there are is not known. Adams estimated a population of between 50 and 75 on the Sabine Refuge, but when a hurricane

brought high water to the refuge and deer concentrated on the few high points above water trappers reported seeing as many as 300 of these small whitetails.

The same coastal race is found on the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, where Manager James O. Stevenson reports that the Gulf Coast deer adapt themselves to both marshlands and inland areas.

Major E. A. Goldman, Fish and Wildlife Service naturalist, is now studying the coastal race. Preliminary observations lead him to believe that the coastal deer have adapted themselves to marshland vegetation but that the animals probably feed on woodland food when it is available.

"Though these deer are smaller than the usual type of woodland white-tail," Major Goldman said, "I suspect that the marsh land deer mix with their woodland cousins."

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